

Agricultural Security Areas

A publication of the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture
Tom Wolf, Governor | Russell Redding, Secretary

What is an Agricultural Security Area?

Agricultural Security Areas (ASA) are a tool for protecting Pennsylvania agriculture. Farmers work with their municipalities to establish areas where agriculture is the primary activity. The ASA designation shows that farming is a local priority and promotes more permanent and viable farming operations. Local municipalities create ASAs at the request of landowners who agree to collectively place at least 250 acres in an ASA.

Who can participate?

Landowners whose property meets these criteria:

- Farm parcels of 10 acres or more, or parcels with an anticipated yearly income of at least \$2,000 from agricultural products.
- The property should be viable agricultural land used for the production of crops, livestock or livestock products, although some nonviable farm land and non-farm land may be included if not feasible to exclude.
- At least 50 percent of the land should be within Soil Capability Classes I-IV or be actively farmed in accordance to a conservation plan.
- The property must be zoned to permit agricultural uses.

What are the benefits of having an enrolled farm?

- The ASA designation is a prerequisite for consideration in the Farmland Preservation Program. Farms within an ASA consisting of at least 500 acres are eligible to apply for an agricultural conservation easement purchase by the commonwealth.
- Government cannot enact local laws or ordinances unreasonably restricting farm structures or practices within ASAs, unless restrictions or regulations have a direct relationship to public health or safety.
- No land can be condemned through eminent domain without being approved by the Agricultural Lands Condemnation Approval Board (ALCAB).

What is included in “crops, livestock and livestock products?”

- Field crops including corn, soybeans, wheat, oats, rye, barley, hay, potatoes and dry beans;
- Fruits including apples, peaches, grapes, cherries and berries;
- Vegetables including tomatoes, snap beans, cabbage, carrots, beets, onions and mushrooms;
- Horticultural specialties including nursery stock, ornamental shrubs, trees and flowers;
- Livestock and livestock products including cattle, sheep, hogs, goats, horses, poultry, furbearing animals, milk, eggs and furs;
- Timber, wood and other wood products derived from trees; and
- Aquatic plants and animals and their byproducts.

What are the restrictions on the enrolled land?

The ASA designation does not restrict the use of the property by the farmer. The farmer may sell or subdivide the property. The farmer or any subsequent owners may develop the property in any manner authorized by local zoning, subdivision and land development regulations.

Can I remove my property from the ASA after it has been enrolled?

While you're obligated to maintain ASA status on the farm for seven years after the initial application, after that you can submit a written request to your local governing body, identifying the land and noting the number of acres to be removed.

What is a Seven Year Review?

The local agricultural advisory committee and governing body will review the ASA seven years from the date the ASA was created by the vote of the governing body, and every seven years after that. This is a chance for the local governing body to add, modify or remove properties, provided it submits written justification for the changes to the landowner. If the body fails to review the ASA at that time, the ASA is automatically renewed as-is for another seven year period.

How do I apply?

- Submit an ASA proposal form to the local government unit by certified mail, return receipt requested. Forms may be acquired from the local municipality, county farmland preservation office or Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture website, www.agriculture.state.pa.us.
- The return receipt is official notice that the municipality has received the form. The date on the receipt is the official date for calculating the reviewing period.
- Landowners within a proposed ASA are not required to pay application fees.

Must I reapply annually for ASA status?

The designation stays with the property when it is sold or subdivided. Re-enrollment is not required.

Contact Us

For more information or an application, visit the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture website at www.agriculture.state.pa.us, contact the county farmland preservation office or your local municipality.

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